

# Media Studies 9100/Popular Music and Culture 9700: Interdisciplinary Foundations of Media Theory & Cultural Studies

**Fall 2018**

**Tuesdays 9:30am – 12:30pm**

**FNB 4110**

**Prof. Amanda Grzyb**

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**Office hours: Tuesdays 1:30 – 3:00 pm**

This course will introduce students to foundational texts in media theory and cultural studies drawn from a range of disciplines: linguistics, political economy, women's studies, psychology, critical race theory, postcolonial theory and literary theory. We will focus on foundational work that is particularly resonant with our current political and cultural moment. As we review these seminal texts, we will also interrogate the structural parameters and institutional backdrop against which 'thinking' happens (or doesn't happen) inside the academy. The course will help students develop skills in close reading, debate and argumentation, and critical writing and research.

Students will post 9 short reading responses (approx. 250 words) before each class on non-presentation weeks and should always come to class prepared to discuss and debate the contents of those responses. The responses will not be graded, but will contribute to the evaluation of participation in the seminar. There are no short papers due on the final day of class. In addition to the response papers, each student will be responsible for two seminar presentations, which are assigned on a sign-up basis. One seminar presentation is 45-60 minutes in length and should provide an overview of the definitions, concepts, themes, and debates related to core reading for that week. The other seminar presentation is 30 minutes in length and should consist of an original conference paper-style argument/example. At the end of the term, students will produce a substantial (3500 words) final research paper.

All readings will be available through either OWL or the new Western Library electronic reserves. While we are sometimes reading excerpts of longer texts, I encourage students to read the full texts (from which they are excerpted) for presentation weeks.

## Evaluation

Participation & 9 weekly online responses (non-presentation weeks, 250-500 words)	20%
Two seminar presentations (20% each)	40%
Final Research Paper (3500 words)	40%

## Online Responses and In-class Participation

I expect students to attend all classes, complete all the assigned readings, and come to class ready to participate in discussion. In-class participation is worth 30% of your total grade, and it will be broken down into two parts. Ten percent of your final grade is based on your attendance, preparedness, and contributions to the seminar meetings. Twenty percent of your final grade will be assessed based on your completion of the 9 weekly online responses. While they will not be graded individually, you will receive credit for finishing them on time and using them as a basis for your contributions to seminar discussions. The responses should not simply summarize the reading, but, rather, should engage critically with any concept, element or theme of the reading you might find problematic or confusing. You may also extrapolate from the reading, making connections to other work you have read or to contemporary issues or themes you are interested in. You may wish to pose questions about the readings and raise points for further discussion.

## Term paper

**Your term paper is 3500 words and it is due at 12:00pm on Friday December 14. Late papers will be penalized 5% per day for up to three days, after which they will no longer be accepted.** Your final term paper can develop from one of your presentation topics, but it may also tackle new material. You might choose to explore one body of theory or one theoretician in depth, critically analyze compelling theoretical intersections of your own choosing between two or more authors examined in this course, or conduct an application of one body of theory to a cultural object or set of practices of interest to you. The paper cannot be simply expository but must contain a clear and developed argument. It will be marked rigorously on matters not only of analytical substance, but also on matters of form, and writing style. I encourage you to begin developing paper topics early and to clear all the topics with me before you begin writing. Please use Chicago style citations as outlined in Kate L. Turabian, *A manual for writers of term papers, theses and dissertations*, University of Chicago Press. Some of the basics of this style can be viewed at university style websites like [www.lib.ohio-state.edu/guides/chicagogd.html](http://www.lib.ohio-state.edu/guides/chicagogd.html).

## OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION:

**Laptops and other electronic devices:** Students are permitted to use laptops in class as long as they use them for note-taking only. Students are not permitted to videotape or audiotape lectures. Please turn off your phone.

**Absenteeism:** Given this course's seminar format, regular attendance is crucial. Appropriate documentation is required for a student to ensure that absences do not affect his/her final grade.

**Support Services:** Please be aware of the following support services that are available to you:

**Office of the Registrar:** [www.registrar.uwo.ca](http://www.registrar.uwo.ca)

**Student Development Centre:** [www.sdc.uwo.ca](http://www.sdc.uwo.ca)

**Writing Support Centre:** [www.sdc.uwo.ca/writing](http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/writing)

**Indigenous Services:** [www.sdc.uwo.ca/Indigenous](http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/Indigenous)

**International and Exchange Student Centre:** [www.sdc.uwo.ca/int](http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/int)

**Learning Skills Services:** [www.sdc.uwo.ca/learning](http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/learning)

**Psychological Services:** <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/psych>

**Services for Students with Disabilities:** [www.sdc.uwo.ca/ssd](http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/ssd)

**Career Centre at Western:** [career.uwo.ca](http://career.uwo.ca)

**Mental Health:** Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

**Scholastic offences:** Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following web site:

[http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/scholastic\\_discipline\\_grad.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_grad.pdf)

**Plagiarism:** Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea, or a passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offence. It is entirely the student's responsibility to be aware of the nature of plagiarism. Penalties for plagiarism include expulsion from the university.

# Weekly Reading Schedule

## Sept 11: Introduction and Seminar Sign-Up

## Sept 18: Ideology, Hegemony, Political Economy

- Karl Marx “The Values of Commodities” and “The Fetishism of Commodities”
- Karl Marx, *Preface to A Contribution to a Critique of Political Economy*:  
<http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1859/critique-pol-economy/preface-abs.htm>
- Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, “Hegemony” and “Culture”
- Tiziana Terranova, “Free Labor”

## Sept 25: Mediation, Reproducibility and Virtuality

- Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction”
- Horkheimer and Adorno, “The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception”
- Jean Baudrillard, “The Precession of Simulacra”

## Oct 2: Signification, Image, and Power

- Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*
- Roland Barthes, “The Photographic Message” and “Rhetoric of the Image”
- Laura Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema”
- Susan Sontag, “In Plato’s Cave’ and “The Image-World”

## Oct 16: Communication as Culture

- James Carey, “Mass Communication Research and Cultural Studies: An American View”
- Raymond Williams, “The Technology and the Society”
- Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste* (excerpt)

## Oct 23: Power, Racialization, and Discourse

- Michel Foucault, *Discipline & Punish* (“The Body of the Condemned,” “Docile Bodies”)
- Stuart Hall, “Foucault: Power, Knowledge and Discourse,”

## Oct 30: Racialization, Racism, and #BlackLivesMatter

- WEB Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (excerpt)
- Paul Gilroy, *There Ain’t No Black in the Union Jack* (excerpt)
- Stuart Hall, “Race: The Floating Signifier”
- Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow* (excerpt)
- Alicia Garza, Rad Talks: Alicia Garza: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cniRNj6m0-A>

**Nov 6: Performance, Presence, Spectacle**

- Guy Debord, *Society of the Spectacle*, “The Commodity as Spectacle”
- Philip Auslander, *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture*, “Tryin’ to Make it real: live performance, simulation, and the discourse of authenticity in rock culture”

**Nov 13: Postmodernism, Post-Fordism, Postcolonialism**

- Frederic Jameson, “Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism”
- David Harvey, *The Condition of Post-Modernity*, “Postmodernism” (excerpt)
- Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire*, “Postmodernisation, or the Informatization of Production”
- Edward Said, *Orientalism* (excerpt)
- Arjun Appadurai, “Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy”
- Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?”

**Nov 20: Feminism and Queer Theory**

- Michael Warner, *The Trouble with Normal: Sex, Politics and the Ethics of Queer Life* (excerpt)
- Eve Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (excerpt)
- Judith Butler, “Undoing Gender” (excerpt)

**Nov 27: Medium Theory: Music and Technological Effects**

- Marshall McLuhan, *The Medium is the Massage* (selections)
- Katz, Mark. *Capturing Sound: How Technology Has Changed Music*. Berkeley (excerpt: 1-47)
- Jonathan Sterne, “Techniques of Listening,” in *The Audible Past: Cultural Origins of Sound Reproduction* (excerpt: 87-136)

**Dec 4: Media Archeology, Hardware and Software**

- Erkki Huhtamo & Jussi Parikka, “An Archaeology of Media Archaeology”
- Friedrich Kittler, “There is No Software”
- Lev Manovich, “There is only Software”
- Matthew Kirschenbaum, “Digital Materiality”

**Dec 11: Conclusions**

- Final reflections on the course
- Summaries of final research paper topics